

# The Trey O' Hearts

A Novelized Version of the Motion Picture Drama of the Same Name  
Produced by the Universal Film Co.

By LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

Author of "The Fortune Hunter," "The Blue Bird," "The Black Bag," etc.  
Illustrated with Photographs from the Picture Production

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## CHAPTER I.

### The Message of the Rose.

Lapped deep in the leather-bound luxury of an ample lounge-chair, walled apart from the world by the venerable solitude of the library of London's most exclusive club, Mr. Alan Law sprawled (largely on the nose of his neck) and, squinting discontentedly down his nose, admitted that he was exhaustively bored.

Now the chair filled so gracefully stood by an open window, some twenty feet below which lay a sizable walled garden, an old English garden in full flower. And through the window, now and then, a half-hearted breeze wafted gusts of warm air, suave and enervating with the heavy fragrance of English roses.

Mr. Law drank deep of it, and in spite of his spiritual unrest, sighed slightly and shut his eyes.

An unspoken word troubled the depth of his consciousness, so that old memories stirred and struggled to its surface. The word was "Rose," and for the time seemed to be the name neither of a woman nor of a flower, but oddly of both, as though the two things were one. His mental vision, bridging the gap of a year, conjured up the vision of a little, sweet silhouette in white, with red roses at her belt, posed on a terrace of the Riviera against the burning Mediterranean blue.

Mr. Law was fully conscious that he ought to be sorry about something, but he was really very drowsy indeed, and so, drinking deep of wine-scented roses, he fell gently asleep.

The clock was striking four when he awoke, and before closing his eyes he had noticed that its hands indicated ten minutes to four. So he could not have slept very long.

For some few seconds Alan did not move, but rested as he was, incredulously regarding a rose which had materialized mysteriously upon the little table at his elbow. He was quite sure it had not been there when he closed his eyes, and almost as sure that it was not real.

And in that instant of awakening the magic fragrance of the rose-garden seemed to be even more strong and cloying sweet than ever.

Then he put out a gingerly hand and discovered that it was real beyond all question. A warm red rose, fresh-plucked, drops of water trembling and sparkling like tiny diamonds on the velvet of its fleshy petals. And when impulsively he took it by the stem, he discovered a most indisputable truth—which did service for the traditional pinch.

Convinced that he wasn't dreaming, Alan transferred the rose to his sound hand, and meditatively sucked his

thumb. Then he jumped up from the chair and glared suspiciously round the room. It was true that a practical joke in that solemn atmosphere was a thing unthinkable; still, there was the rose.

There was no one but himself in the library.

Perplexed to exasperation, Alan fled the club, only pausing on the way out to annex the envelope he found addressed to him in the letter-rack.

It was a blank white envelope of good quality, the address typewritten in stamp English, and bore a London postmark half illegible.

Alan tore the envelope open in a semi-conscious fashion—and started as if stung. The enclosure was a slim playing card—a tray of hearts!

As for Alan Law, he wandered homeward in a state of stupefaction. He could read quite well the message of the rose. He would not soon forget that year-old parting with his Rose of the Riviera: "You say you love me but may not marry me—and we must part. Then promise this that if ever you change your mind you'll send for me." And her promise: "I will send you a rose."

But the year had lapsed with never a sign from her, so that he had grown accustomed to the unflattering belief that she had forgotten him.

And now the sign had come—but what the deuce did the tray of hearts mean?

When morning came, London had lost Alan Law. No man of his acquaintance—not any woman—had received the least warning of his disappearance. He was simply and sufficiently removed from English ken.

## CHAPTER II.

### The Sign of the Three.

Out-of-doors, high brazen noon, a day in spring, the clamorous life of New York running as fluent as quicksilver through its brilliant streets.

Within-doors, neither sound nor sun-beam disturbed a perennial quiet that was yet not peace.

The room was like a wide, deep well of night, the haunt of teeming shadows and sinister silences.

Little, indeed, was visible beyond the lonely shape that brooded over it, the figure of an old man motionless in a great, leather-bound chair.

His hair was as white as his heart was black. The rack of his bones, clothed in a thick black dressing-gown with waist-cord of crimson silk, from the thighs down was covered by a black woollen rug. He stared unblinkingly at nothing; a man seven-eighths dead, completely paralyzed but for his head and his left arm.

Presently a faint clicking signal disturbed the stillness. Seneca Trine put forth his left hand and touched one of a row of crimson buttons embedded in the desk. Something else clicked—this time a latch. There was the faintest possible noise of a closing door, and a smallish man stole noiselessly into the light, paused beside the desk and waited respectfully for leave to speak.

"Well?"

"A telegram, sir—from England." "Give it me!"

The old man seized the sheet of yellow paper, scanned it hungrily, and crumpled it in his tremulous claw with a gesture of uncontrollable emotion.

"Send my daughter Judith here!" Two minutes later a young woman in street dress was admitted to the chamber of shadows.

"You sent for me, father?" "Sit down."

She found and placed a chair at the desk, and obediently settled herself in it.

"Judith—tell me—what day is this?" "My birthday. I am twenty-one."

"And your sister's birthday? Rose, too, is twenty-one?" "Yes."

"You could have forgotten that," the old man pursued almost mockingly. "Do you really dislike your twin sister so intensely?"

The girl's voice trembled. "You know," she said, "we have nothing in common—beyond parentage and this abominable resemblance. Our natures differ as light from darkness."

"And which would you say was—light?"

"Hardly my own. I'm no hypocrite. Rose is everything that they tell me my mother was, while I—the girl smiled strangely. "I think—I am more your daughter than my mother's."

A nod of the white head confirmed the suggestion. "It is true. I have watched you closely, Judith, perhaps more closely than even you know. Before I was brought to this—the wasted hand made a significant gesture—"I was a man of strong passions. Your mother never loved, but rather feared me. And Rose is the mirror of her mother's nature, gentle, unselfish, sympathetic. But you, Judith, you are like a second self to me."

An accent of profound satisfaction informed his voice. The girl waited in a silence that was tensely expectant.

"Then, if on this your birthday I were to ask a service of you that might injuriously affect the happiness of your sister—?"

The girl laughed briefly. "Only ask it!"

"And how far would you go to do my will?"

"Where would you stop in the service of one you loved?"

Seneca Trine nodded gravely. And after a brief pause, "Rose is in love," he announced.

"Oh, I know—I know!" the father affirmed with a faint ring of satisfaction. "I am old, a cripple, prisoner of this living tomb; but all things I should know—somehow—I come to know in course of time!"

"It's true—that Englishman she scraped an acquaintance with on the Riviera last year—what's his name?" Law, Alan Law."

She knew better than to interrupt, but her seeming patience was belied by the whitening knuckles of a hand that lay within the little pool of blood-red light.

And presently the deep voice rolled out: "Law and I were once friends;

then—it came to pass that we loved one woman, your mother. I won her—all but her heart; too late she realized it was Law she loved. He never forgave me, nor I him. Though he married another woman, still he held from me the love of my wife. I could not sleep for hating him—and he was no better off. Each sought the other's ruin; it came to be an open duel between us, in Wall street. One of us had to fall—and I held the stronger hand. The night before the day that was to have seen my triumph, I walked in Central park, as was my habit to tire my body so that my brain might sleep. Crossing the East drive I was struck by a motor-car running at high speed without lights. I was picked up insensible—and lived only to be what I am today. Law triumphed in the street while I lay helpless; only a living remnant of my fortune remained to me. Then his



We Both Loved One Woman.

chauffeur, discharged, came to me and sold me the truth; it was Law's car with Law at the wheel that had struck me down—a deliberate attempt at assassination. I sent Law word that I meant to have a life for a life. For what was I better than dead? I promised him that should he escape, I would have the life of his son. He knew I meant it, and sent his wife and son abroad. Then he died suddenly, of some common ailment—the said; but I knew better. He died of fear of me."

Trine smiled a cruel smile. "I had made his life a reign of terror. Ever so often I would send Law, one way or another—mysteriously always—a tray of hearts; it was my death-signal for him; as you know, our name, Trine, signifies a group of three. And every time he received a tray of hearts, within twenty-four hours an attempt of some sort would be made upon his life. The strain broke down his nerve."

"Then I turned my attention to the son, but the distance was too great, the difficulties insuperable. The Law millions mocked all my efforts, the alliance with the Rothschilds placed mother and son under the protection of every secret police in Europe. But they dared not come home. At length I realized I could win only by playing a waiting game. I needed three things: more money; to bring Alan Law back to America; and one agent I could trust, one incorruptible agent. I ceased to persecute mother and son, lulled them into a sense of false security, and by careful speculations repaired my fortunes. In Rose I had the lure to draw the boy back to America. In you, the one person I could trust."

"I sent Rose abroad and arranged that she should meet Law. They fell in love at sight. Then I wrote informing her that the man she had chosen was the son of him who had murdered all of me but my brain. It fell out as I foresaw. You can imagine the scene of passionate renunciation—pledges of undying constancy—the arrangement of a secret code whereby, when she needed him, she would send him a single rose—the birth of a great romance!"

The old man laughed rancorously. "Well, there is the history. Now the rose has been sent; Law is already homeward bound; my agents are watching his every step. The rest is in your hands."

The girl bent forward, breathing heavily, eyes aflame in a face that had assumed a waxen pallor.

"What is it you want of me?" "Bring Alan Law to me. Dead or alive, bring him to me. But alive, if you can compass it, I wish to see him die. Then I, too, may die content."

The hand of hot-blooded youth stole forth and grasped the icy hand of death-in-life.

"I will bring him," Judith swore—"dead or alive, you shall have him here."

## CHAPTER III.

### The Trail of Treachery.

But young Mr. Law was sole agent of his own evanescence; just as he was nobody's fool, least of all his own. The hidden meaning of all his overtures perplexed him with such distrust that before leaving London, he dispatched a code telegram to his confidential agent in New York.

What do you know about the tray of hearts? Answer immediately.

The answer forestalled his arrival in Liverpool: Trine's death sign for your father. For God's sake, look to yourself and keep away from America.

But Alan had more than once visited America incognito and unknown to Seneca Trine via a secret route of his own selection.

Eight days out of London, a second-class passenger newly landed from one of the C.P. steamships, he walked the streets of Quebec—and dropped out of sight between dusk and dawn, to turn up presently in the distant Canadian hamlet of St. Paul, apparently a very tenderfooted American woods-traveler chaperoned by a taciturn Indian guide picked up heaven-knows-where.

Crossing the St. Lawrence by night, the two struck off quietly into the hinterland of the Notre Dame range, then crossed the Maine border.

On the second noon thereafter, trail worn and weary, as lean as their depleted packs, the two passed on a ridge-pole of the wilderness up back of the Allagash country, and made their midday meal in a silence which, if normal in the Indian, was one of deep misgivings on Alan's part.

Continually his gaze questioned the northern skies that lowered portentously, foul with smoke—a country-wide conflagration that threatened all northern Maine, bone-dry with drought.

Only the south offered a fair prospect. And the fire were making southward far faster than man might hope to travel through that grim and stubborn land.

Even as he stared, Alan saw fresh columns of dun-colored smoke spring up in the northwest.

Anxiously he consulted the impassive mask of the Indian, from whom his questions gained Alan little comfort. Jacob recommended forced marches to Spirit Lake, where canoes might be found to aid their flight, and withdrew into sullen reserve.

They traveled far and fast by dim forest trails before sundown, then again paused for food and rest. And as Jacob sat hunched about preparing the meal, Alan stumbled off to whit the little trail-side stream for trout.

Perhaps a hundred yards upstream, the back-fall of a careless cast by his weary hand hooked the state of Maine. Two tired even to remember the appropriate words, Alan scrambled ashore, forced through the thick undergrowth that masked the trail, found his fly, set the state of Maine free—and swinging on his heel brought up, nose to a sapling, trace-board fixed to its trunk, a tray of hearts, of which each pin had been neatly punctured by a 22-caliber bullet.

He carried it back to camp, meaning to consult the guide, but on second thought, held his tongue. It was not likely that the Indian had overlooked an object so conspicuous on the trail.

So Alan waited for him to speak—and meantime determined to watch Jacob more narrowly, though no other suspicious circumstance had marked the several days of their association.

The first half of the night was, as the day, devoted to relentless progress southward; thirty minutes of steady logging, five minutes for rest—and repeat.

No more question as to the need for such urgent haste; overhead the north wind muttered without ceasing. Thin veils of smoke drifted through the forest, hugging the ground, like some weird acid mist, and ever the sun-faded heavens glared, livid with reflected fire.

By midnight Alan had come to the bounds of endurance; flesh, bone and sinew could no longer stand the strain. Though Jacob declared that Spirit Lake was now only six hours distant, as far as concerned Alan he might have said 600. His blanket once unrolled, Alan dropped upon it like one drugged.

The sun was high when he awakened and sat up, rubbing heavy eyes, stretching aching limbs, wondering what had come over the Indian to let him sleep so late.

Of a sudden he was assailed by sickening fears that needed only the briefest investigation to confirm. Jacob had absconded with every valuable item of their equipment.

Nor was his motive far to seek. Overnight the fire had made tremendous gains. And ever and anon the wind would bring down the roar of the holocaust, dulled by distance but not unlike the growling of wild animals feeding on their kill.

Alan delayed long enough only to swallow a few mouthfuls of raw food gulped water from a spring, and set out at a dog-trot on the trail to Spirit Lake.

For hours he blundered blindly on, holding to the trail mainly by instinct. At length, panting, gasping, half-blinded, he staggered into a little natural clearing and plunged forward headlong, so bewildered that he could not have said whether he was tripped or thrown; for even as he stumbled a heavy body landed on his back and crushed him savagely to earth.

In less than a minute he was over come; his wrists hitched together, his ankles bound with heavy cord.

When his vision cleared he found Jacob within a yard, regarding him with a face as immobile as though it had been cast in the bronze it resembled.

Beyond, to one side, a woman in a man's hunting costume stood eyeing the captive as narrowly as the Indian, but unlike him with a countenance that seemed aglow with a fierce exultancy over his downfall.

But for that look, he could have believed hers the face that had brought

him overseas to this mortal pass. Features for feature, even to the hue of her tumbled hair, she counterfeited the woman he loved; only those eyes, aflame with their look of inhuman ruthlessness, denied that the two were one.

He sought vainly to speak. The breath rustled in his parched throat like wind whispering among dead leaves.

Thrusting the Indian roughly aside, the woman knelt in his place by Alan's head.

"No," she said, and smiling cruelly, shook her head—"no, I am not your Rose. But I am her sister, Judith, her twin, born in the same hour, daughter of—can you guess whose daughter? But see this!" She flashed a card from within her hunting shirt and held it before his eyes. "You know it, oh! The tray of hearts—the symbol of Trine—Trine, your father's enemy, and yours and Rose's father and mine! So, now, perhaps you know!"

A gust of wind like a furnace blast swept the glade. The woman sprang up, glanced over-shoulder into the forest, and signed to the Indian.

"In ten minutes," she said, "these woods will be your funeral pyre."

She stepped back. Jacob advanced, picked Alan up, shouldered his body, and strode back into the forest. Ten feet in from the clearing he dropped the helpless man supine upon a bed of dry logs and branches.

Then, with a single movement, he disappeared.

## CHAPTER IV.

### Many Waters.

Overhead, through a rift in the foliage, a sky was visible whose ebullience called to mind a thunder cloud.

The heat was nearly insupportable, the voice of the fire was very loud.

A heavy, broken cawling near by made Alan turn his head, and he saw a brown bear break cover and plunge on into the farther thickets—fore-runner of a mad rout of terrified forest folk deer, porcupines, a fox or two, a wildcat, rabbits, squirrels, partridges—a dozen more.

Two minutes had passed of the ten something was discharging uncomfortably into Alan's right hip; the automatic pistol in his pocket, of which Jacob had neglected to relieve him. Then a sharp, spitting crackling brought him suddenly to a sitting position to find that the Indian had thoughtfully touched a match to the pyre before departing. At Alan's feet the twines were blazing merrily.

It would have been any enough, acting on instinct, to clutch his flanks away, but he did not move more than to strain his feet as far as their hands permitted. Conscious of scorching heat even through his hunting boots, he suffered that torture until a tongue of flame licked up, wrapped itself round the thick newspaper cord and ate it through.

Immediately Alan kicked his feet free, lifted to a kneeling position, and crawled from the pyre.

As for his hands—Alan's hunting-knife was still in its sheath bolted to the small of his back. Tearing at the belt with his hampered fingers, he contrived to shift it round until the sheath knife stuck at the belt-loop over his left hip. Withdrawing and conveying the blade to his mouth, he

leaped perceptibly, thanks to the strong current sucking through the spillway.

His chat flew wide, but almost instinctively his finger closed again upon the trigger, and he saw the paddle snap in twain, its blade falling overhead. And then the Indian fired again, his bullet dropping past Alan's ear.

As he fired in response Jacob started, dropped his rifle and crumpled up in the low of the canoe.

Simultaneously earth and heavens rocked with a terrific clag of thunder.

He turned again and ran swiftly along the dam, toward two heavy timbers that bridged the torrent of the spillway.

Then a chance aside brought him up with a thrill of horror; the snuck of the overflow had drawn the canoe within a hundred yards of the spillway. The dead Indian in its stern, it swept swiftly onward to destruction.

His next few actions were wholly unpremeditated. He was conscious only of his white, staring face, her strange likeness to the woman that he loved.

He ran out upon the bridge, threw himself down upon the innermost timber, turned, and let his body fall backward, arms extended at length, and swung, brood by his feet beneath the outer timber.

With a swift thought that passed conscious thought, he was aware of the canoe hurtling onward with the speed of wind, its sharp prow apparently aimed directly for his head. Then hands closed round his wrists like clumps, a tremendous weight tore at his arms, and with an effort of inconceivable difficulty he began to lift, to drag the woman up out of the foaming jaws of death.

Somehow that impossible feat was achieved; somehow the woman gained a hold upon his body, shifted it to his belt, contrived inexplicably to clamber over him to the timbers; and somehow he in turn pulled himself up to safety, and with reaction sprawled prone, lengthwise upon that foot-wide bridge, above the screaming abyss.

Later he became aware that the woman had crawled to safety on the farther shore, and pulling himself together, imitated her example. Solid earth underfoot, he rose and stood swaying, beset by a great weakness.

Through the gathering darkness—a ghastly twilight in which the flaming forests on the other shore burned with an unearthly glare—he discovered the man, written face of Judith Trine close to his, and he heard her voice, a scream barely audible above the commingled voices of the conflagration and the cascades.

"You fool! Why did you save me? I tell you, I have sworn your death!" The utter grotesqueness of it all broke upon his intelligence like the revelation of some enormous fundamental absurdity in Nature. He laughed a little hysterically.

Darkness followed. A flash of lightning seemed to flame between them like a fiery sword. To its crashing thunder, he lapsed into unconsciousness.

When he roused, it was with a shiver and a shudder. Rain was falling in torrents from a sky the hue of slate. Across the lake dense volumes of steam enveloped the fires that faintly beneath the deluge. A great hissing noise filled the world, muting even the roar of the spillway.

He was alone. But in his hand, tattered and bruised by the downpour, he found—a rose.

Trine and the Indian—the latter yielding the paddle.

In the act of turning toward the dam he saw Jacob drop the paddle. The next instant a bullet from a Winchester 30 kicked up a spurt of pebbles only a few feet in advance of Alan.

He quickened his pace, but the next bullet fell closer, while the third actually bit the earth beneath his running feet as he gained the dam.

Exasperated, he pulled up, whipped out his pistol and fired without aim. At the same time, he noted that the distance between dam and canoe had



A Tremendous Weight Tore at His Arms.

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## A CLOUDY SEASON FOR SEVERAL BASEBALL LEAGUES

LAJOIE, WAGNER AND JOHN HAVE HAD POOR SEASONS

Many Other Famous Pastimes Witnesses Recruits Best Their Efforts.

NEW YORK, Sept. 5.—A gloomy season's baseball record shows that a surprisingly large number of the famous pastimes have failed to catch the step this year. The National and American leagues have both failed to produce a champion, and the list of successful players who have shown up in the league is a long one. The list of successful players who have shown up in the league is a long one. The list of successful players who have shown up in the league is a long one.

Thomas Wagner, the second-best of veterans, has been up and down the league in the same way. Wagner has been up and down the league in the same way. Wagner has been up and down the league in the same way.

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The above is the first installment of Vance's great moving picture story and the pictures for the above will be shown at the Amusu Theatre next Saturday afternoon and night. The next installment of the story will appear in the Caller on Sunday, September 13.